

Pluralism in Creative Organizational Development Management

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Pluralism, in the broadest sense, can be understood, on one hand, as the appreciation of different perceptions and interpretations of management problem situations in organizations, and, on the other hand, as a combined use of various methodologies, methods, models, techniques in problem situations structuring and problem solving. Initially determined in this way, pluralism should be treated as a research area that is specially significant for organizational development management, in theoretical, methodological and applicable senses.

A relevant break-through is made in dealing with pluralism in systems thinking and systems practice. In the first place, the important result of confronting the different system conceptualizations of organizational problem areas is the powerful Systems movement. At the same time, systems thinking has shown a great potential for fruitfully linking the theory with practice. Namely, in order to understand a management problem situation in a proper way, and to intervene in such situation effectively and efficiently, systems thinking, through employing the valuable contributions of social sciences, tries to support a variety of perspectives on the management problem situation under consideration. Also, systems thinking, through the combined use of methodologies for problem situations structuring, attempts to creatively manage the interventions in organizations. System research tries to improve pluralistic practice in organizations by continual thinking about relevant implications of pluralism at a theoretical level.

In order to identify the possibilities of founding the systems thinking on pluralism and to determine the usefulness of systems practice in organizations when they are managed by means of pluralism, it is necessary: a) to examine the relationship between pluralism, as a special developmental strategy of systems thinking, and strategies of isolationism, imperialism and pragmatism, and b) to consider the basic pluralistic systemic theoretical-methodological and applicable developments – System of Systems Methodologies, Total Systems Intervention and Multimethodology.

1. Introduction

Broadly speaking, pluralism in organizational development management should be understood as:

- a) *appreciation of different perceptions and interpretations* of the management problem situations under consideration, and
- b) an appropriate *combined use of various methodologies, methods, models, and techniques* in structuring the management problem situations and problem solving.

Initially defined in this way, pluralism is obviously a distinctive problem area, relevant in terms of both theory, methodology, and application.

The key reasons for a broad, well founded study of pluralism in the modern *Systems Science* and *Management Science* are numerous and varied [6, 2000, pp. 377 - 378]. Primarily, it is a well known fact that traditional approaches have become the issue of much criticism in various applied disciplines. In the systems thinking, in organizational theory, and in classic operational research, the old, orthodox approaches have become the issue of justified challenge, the new perspectives being opened in the paradigmatic sense. The relations be-

tween different approaches to the development of each particular discipline are the topic of special study. Challenging totalizing discourses that claim to command the truth and generating conditions for the emergence of respective relativism, appears as special support to research into pluralism. Besides, from the practitioners' point of view, pluralism apparently becomes indispensable in the processes of creative management of the development of modern organizations.

An important breakthrough has been made in the systems thinking and practice into the study of pluralism. In the first place, through the conflict among various systemic conceptualizations of relevant organizational problem areas, the *Systems movement* came out stronger. Simultaneously, systems thinking displayed a remarkable potential for a reasoned and useful linking of theory and practice.

Making use of respective contributions of social sciences, systems thinking tries to support a certain *variability of standpoint* on a complex and manyfold management problem situation under consideration that we wish to apprehend and effectively and efficiently inter-

vene into. Furthermore, systems thinking applies a *combined use of methodologies* of management problem situations structuring to creatively conduct interventions in complex and dynamic organizations. Systems thinking tries to improve pluralistic practice through reasoning on the implications of pluralism on a theoretical level.

Dealing with pluralism in purposeful managing the relevant problem areas in organizations means:

- analysing the relationship between pluralism as a distinctive *Management Science* development strategy, that is, systems thinking, and the strategies of isolationism, imperialism and pragmatism, and
- analysing basic pluralistically-systemic theoretical, methodological and applicable developments.

2. Pluralistic strategy of systemic thinking and practice development

In defining the possibilities of using pluralism as basis to establish systems thinking and in determining the benefit the systems practices may have in organizations if managed through pluralism, it is necessary, in the first place, to analyse the relationship between *pluralism* as a distinctive strategy of systems thinking development and the *isolationism*, *imperialism* and *pragmatism* strategies.

The efforts to determine the nature of pluralism in the systems area and to find out whether pluralism is the best practice of improving systems thinking stemmed, on one hand, from a certain lack of trust in the success of the traditional Management Science (MS), and, on the other hand, from an evident development of Organizational cybernetics, the *soft* systems approaches and the critically-systemic alternatives to the orthodox traditional MS. Each of the mentioned theoretical-methodological alternatives was claimed to significantly contribute to the building of MS. Efforts were also made to investigate into how the relationship between the traditional MS and these alternative theoretical-methodological developments can be best explained scientifically and used in such a way so that MS should be most fruitfully applied in organizations and in the society. As regards the above mentioned, the following four MS *developmental strategies* emerged: isolationism, imperialism, pragmatism and pluralism [5, 1995, pp. 311 - 316].

The strategy of **isolationism** is supposed to result into the presence of various trends in MS, the trends that develop independently, on the bases of their own hypotheses, and with a minimum interaction. The promoters of isolationism deem their MS approach to be

self-sufficient. They believe that there is nothing to learn from other perspectives, which are considered useless. In such circumstances, the attempts of building the ideas of alternative methodological tendencies into a certain preferential position might weaken the given position, therefore they are taken as a serious threat. The isolationists are especially powerful in the traditional MS and in the Organizational cybernetics.

The *paradigmatic incompatibility*¹ can be quoted as supportive to isolationistic strategy. There are suggestions that isolationism should be abandoned since it disintegrates MS as a scientific discipline, prevents establishing purposeful relationships of different methodological tendencies, and discredits the profession with clients who do not believe that one method is enough to solve all the problems.

The **imperialistic** strategy has it that one MS approach is superior to its other methodological trends, capable of providing adequate premises for the development of MS as a distinct scientific discipline. It is simultaneously willing to incorporate certain aspects of other methodological trends, provided that they can, in terms of favoured approach, be useful and fortifying. The knowledge gained from other methodological developments will be integrated into the theoretical-methodological apparatus of the favoured approach as long as these do not endanger its key principles. The representatives of the imperialistic strategy believe that they can explain the presence of alternative approaches, as well as analyse the limited sphere of their use, in the category of the approach they consider to be the leading one. Especially powerful imperialistic aspirations are identified in the *soft* systems thinking (*hard* systems thinking is often taken to be a special case of *soft* systems thinking) [1, 1985, pp. 757 - 767] and Organizational cybernetics.

This MS developmental strategy of was abandoned since, in order to be applicable within any other paradigm, the methodologies and methods developed to function in one paradigm have to be “denaturalised“, that is, deprived of their key determinants, therefore the full potential available for MS cannot be realized. At the same time, the imperialistic scenario of MS development is considered to be feasible if broader, social impacts favour one approach over certain other methodological alternatives, endangering their chances to be applied.

¹ As the *paradigm* commonly means the apprehension of the world accepted by the scientific community, that is, a set of ideas, hypotheses, beliefs that lead its scientific activity, the *incompatibility of paradigms* could be presented in the following way: groups relying on different paradigms, when looking from the same point in the same direction, see different things [10, 1970, p. 150].

The **pragmatist** strategy develops the MS joining the best elements of trends that seem to even contradict each other, in accord with the criterion of practical applicability. The pragmatists do not bother to take “artificial” theoretical distinctions into consideration. They concentrate upon building an appropriate “collection of tools” in which the methods and techniques are taken from different MS trends and prepared to be jointly used in the course of problem solving, on condition the problem situation under consideration justifies the application of a given set of methods and techniques. The selection of methods and techniques, as well as the entire procedure, are deemed to be justified as measured by the results obtained in practice. The appeal of the pragmatist option is evident among the representatives of the traditional MS and some *soft* systems thinkers.

This strategy, however, was abandoned because it failed to support the development of MS as a distinct scientific discipline. Theory, which the representatives of the pragmatist strategy try to avoid, is necessary to explain why certain methods are successful, while others are not, that is, to enable us to learn from experience and to be in a position to pass the lessons learned to others. Besides, pragmatism is especially dangerous in the social field, as it may result in errors to be dearly paid for, otherwise possible to avoid by following relevant theories. Also, pragmatism may lead to the application of methods whose implementation is ensured, not because they are most appropriate to the problem situation under consideration, but because they further strengthen the position of the powerful.

The **pluralistic** vision means a continuous presence of a certain variety of trends within the MS. Theoretical, methodological and practical developments will be mutually shaped. It is an accepted fact that different approaches stress different relevant interlinked aspects of the complex and multilayer management problem under consideration. The strengths and weaknesses of the MS trends will be better understood and the field of effective application of each approach must be determined individually. The diversity of theories and methodologies available in the MS is understood not as heralding a crisis in the MS as a scientific discipline, but as expressing an growing competence and effectiveness in a certain variety of management problem situations [18, 2004, pp. 411 – 431].

Contrary to the above analysed options for the MS, the pluralistic strategy is understood as offering excellent chances for a successful development of the MS. As regards the views on the paradigmatic incompatibility, pluralism is, at least in a preliminary manner,

defended by the arguments that different theoretical-methodological MS developments are necessary as a support to different anthropologically established cognitive human interests [3, 1972]:

- the **technical** interest in anticipation and control is supported by *hard* and cybernetic approaches,
- the **practical** interest in broadening mutual understanding of relevant stakeholders is supported by *soft* systems approaches, and
- the **emancipatory** interest in relieving the limitations imposed by power relations is supported by critical systems approaches.

Pluralism is considered to offer, as regards the foundations of a traditional MS, the best bases for the (re)construction of the MS as a cohesive discipline and profession.

3. Pluralistic systemic theoretical-methodological and applicable developments

The three basic, relevant formal expressions of the pluralistic systems thinking and practice development may be specified and studied:

- a) *System of Systems Methodologies*,
- b) *Total Systems Intervention*, and
- c) *Multimethodology*.

In the first place, the **System of Systems Methodology** (SiSiM) is a central instrument of the research directed:

- *theoretically*, towards explaining the relationships between varied systemic founded methodologies and
- *practically*, towards identifying the achievement in the application of systems methodologies of management problem situations structuring in different problem contexts in organizations [9, 1984, pp. 473 – 486; 4, 1990, pp. 657 – 668; 7, 2006 a, pp. 868 – 878].

The SiSiM attempts to show that different systems methodologies, relying on different hypotheses on the nature of different ideally-standard management problem contexts, can be understood as an appropriate, scientifically founded and practically beneficial *complementary* set.

The starting point in the building of the SiSiM was the idea that it is possible to develop an ideally-standard matrix of problem context, that may be used to classify systems methodologies in accordance with their key premises on the nature of problem situations.

The two basic dimensions of management problem situations in organizations are the following:

- a) the *system* dimension – defines the nature of the system within which the problems under considerations are located, and
- b) the *participant* dimension – determines the nature of the relations between the participants interested in the management problems situation and its improvement.

The *systems*, within which the management problems are located, are classed in a continuum from relatively simple to extremely complex, according to the following criteria: the number of subsystems, the number and the level of organization of the subsystems interactions, the preliminary determination / the prior lack of determination of the subsystems' properties, deterministic / probabilistic laws in the systems conduct, systems nonevolution / evolution over time, nongenerating / generating the subsystems own objectives, a considerable exclusiveness / openness of the systems as regards the environment. Relatively simple management problems are embraced and expressed by relatively simple systems, while extremely complex management problems situations are represented by complex systems.

In turn, the relations among the *participants* in the management problem situation under consideration

are observed as unitary, pluralistic or forced, in that the criteria for categorization of the participants' relations are the following: existence / non-existence of mutual interests, the level of compatibility / conflict of values and thinking, the level of consensus / lack of consensus on the goals and means, participation / no participation in the problem solving and decision-making processes, acting in accordance with the agreed goals.

The result of a one-off consideration into the specified key dimensions of the management problems situations – systems dimensions and the participant dimensions – is a respective matrix of six basic types of problems contexts in organizations: simple-unitary, complex-unitary, simple-pluralistic, complex-pluralistic, simple-forced, complex-forced.

Identifying the six ideally-standard problems contexts in organizations implies the need for a variety of methodologies of management problems situations structuring, having in mind that crucial differences between the problems contexts are to be reflected in different methodology types. Therefore, the next step in the building of the SiSiM is the linking the existing systems methodologies of problem situations structuring, that is, the management problem solving methods, with defined problem contexts – Figure 1. [16, 2006, p. 350; 17, 2007, p. 214].:

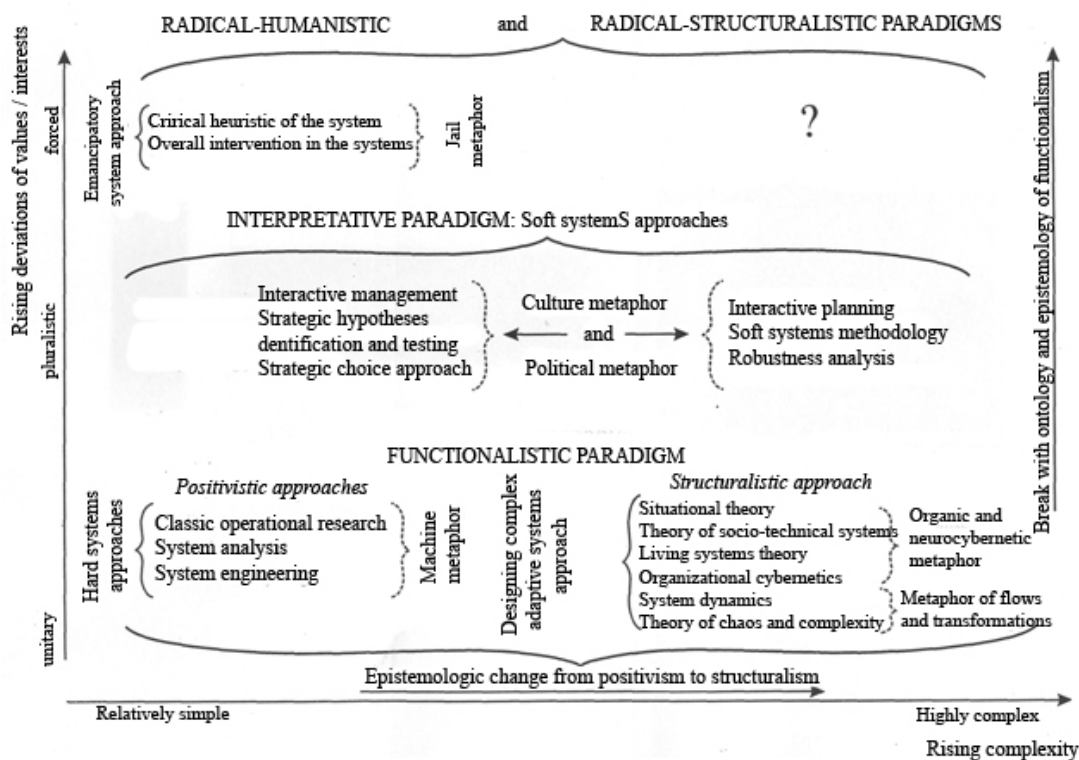


Figure 1. The System of Systems Methodology

Indeed,

- *hard* systems thinking, that is, positivistic-functional approaches, e.g., classic Operational Research, System Analysis, System Engineering, are geared to the problems located within relatively simple-unitary contexts, as it is assumed that it is easy to identify indirect goals in the system under consideration, and that it can be modelled mathematically;
- Socio-technical and Situational Approaches, Systems Dynamics, Organizational Cybernetics, Theory and Methodology of Complexity as structuralist-functional approaches to designing complex adaptive systems are associated with the complex-unitary contexts, as they are deliberately focused upon understanding problem situations as extremely complex systems;
- Different *soft* systems approaches of the interpretative paradigm of systems thinking, e.g., Identifying and Testing of strategic hypotheses, the Interactive Management, Strategic Choice Approach, the Methodology of *Soft* Systems, Interactive Planning, Robustness Analysis, the Development and Analysis of Strategic Options, are identified with simple-pluralistic and complex-pluralistic contexts;
- The forced problem contexts correspond with emancipatory systems approaches, e.g., the Critical Heuristics of the Systems, the Synergy Integration of the Team, and certain more recent post-modernist methodological developments.

The developed SiSiM brought several important *benefits* in its wake. First and foremost, the SiSiM requires the researchers to determine the methodology that is most adequate to a problem context under consideration, for any management problem situation they deal with. Then, the SiSiM helps understand the difficulties resulting from the application of a problem solving methodological approach that is inadequate to a concrete problem context – for example, in case of applying the Methodology of *soft* systems in forced management problem contexts. Finally, of crucial importance – especially in the long run – is the opening of a new perspective of systems thinking and *Management Science* development. In fact, appreciating the different methodologies as sets of instruments geared to different problem contexts, the SiSiM has offered an adequate method of departing from the debates on Operational Research and systems research in which the various methodologies/methods of problem solving are understood as competitive. An evident breakthrough made by the SiSiM suggested an opportunity to achieve pluralism based on different methodologies

(*hard*, cybernetic, *soft* systems approaches, etc.) developed from *more than one paradigm*.

However, the pluralism incorporated in the SiSiM is implicitly limited to different interventions into the organizational development management. Namely, the application of varied methodologies within one and the same intervention has not been taken into consideration. Another drawback of the SiSiM results from the lack of explicit distinction made between the methodology concept (as regards the entire theory of method application) and the methods or techniques concepts, which in turn results into a lack of flexibility in the use of methods, models, techniques, instruments together with methodology applied. For example, the selection of the Methodology of *Soft* Systems automatically requires the use of various techniques associated with this methodology (“rich images“, CATWOE, etc). In addition to the above said, not much attention is paid to other ways of understanding problem contexts. That is, the problem solver should examine the problem contexts in the light of different appreciations of the world, in order to determine which of the appreciations is most adequate in reflecting the essence of the management problem context he encounters.

A particular, relevant pluralistic theoretical, methodological and applicable development in the *Systems Movement* is represented by the Total Systems Intervention (TSI) [2, 1991, pp. 45 – 60; 6, 2000, pp. 368 – 373; 8, 2006 b, pp. 647 - 657]. Understood as a meta-methodology, the TSI could conduct academic research and counsel practitioners on which methodological approach is most beneficial in problem situations they deal with. The key SiSiM idea that pluralism should be based on different concepts of the management problem situation under consideration and on the use of respective methodologies in combination, is operationalized in the TSI.

As a new approach to planning, designing, problem solving in organizations, and evaluation, the TSI relies on the *critical* systems thinking in a philosophical, or theoretical sense. The basic liabilities of critical systems thinking – primarily identified as:

- critical and social awareness,
- human welfare and emancipation, and
- complementarism at academic and methodological levels

are incorporated into the TSI.

Certain crucial *principles* operationalized in the TSI are:

- Organizations are too complicated to be understood by means of one management model, and

their problems are too complex to be discussed via the so-called prompt identification.

- Organizations and their problems ought to be researched into using a respective rank of systems metaphors.
- Relevant organizational aspects and problems, highlighted by means of metaphors, may be linked with respective systems methodologies for intervention conduct.
- Different systems metaphors and methodologies may be used in a *complementary* manner in order

that varied vital aspects of organizations and their problems be identified and stressed.

- The strengths and weaknesses of systems methodologies can be estimated, and each methodology may be linked to respective organizational problems.
- The TSI develops a system interactive cycle of research. Relevant stakeholders are included in all the phases of the TSI.

The pluralism underlying the TSI is operationalized in each of its three key *phases* – Figure 2. [16, 2006, pp. 526]:

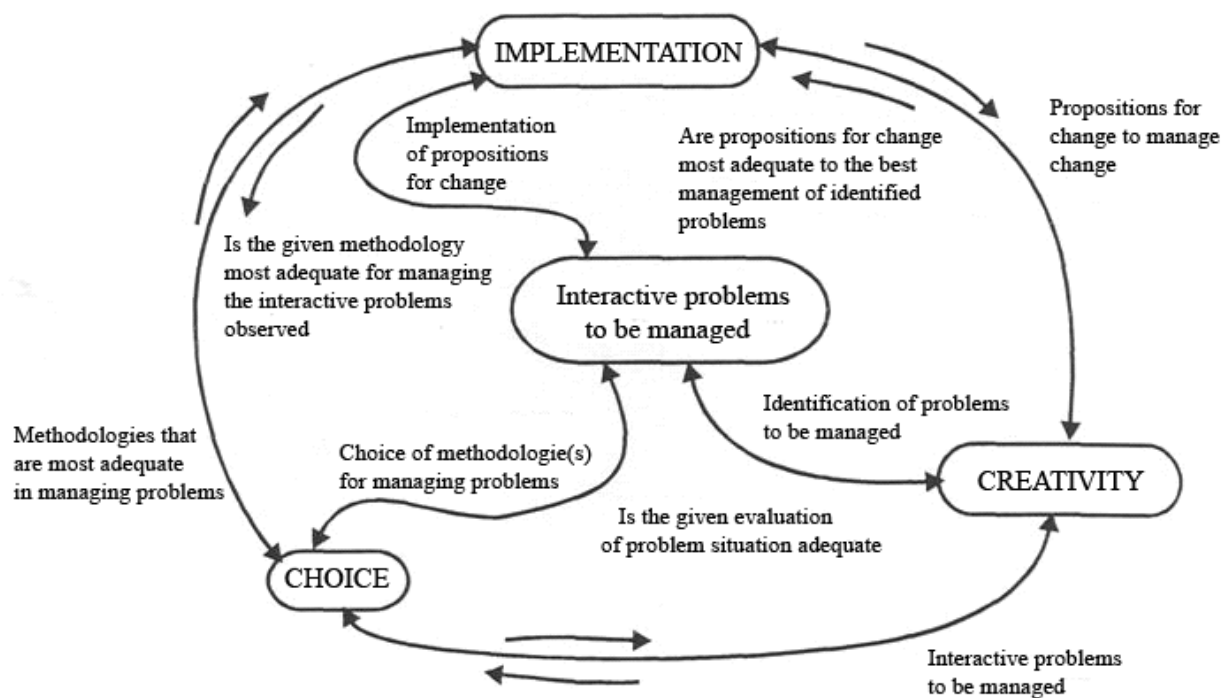


Figure 2. *The Total Systems Intervention*

The task in the *creativity* phase is to use the systems metaphors as organizing structures to help managers and other stakeholders think creatively of their enterprises. The given organizational metaphors – machinery, organic, brain metaphor, culture metaphor, political system metaphor, physical prison metaphor, the flow and transformation metaphor, the domination instrument metaphor [15, 1997] are focused upon varied relevant aspects of the organization under consideration and upon its problems – the organizational culture, the human and political aspects of organization, etc. Pluralism is introduced as a means to obtain a broader knowledge of management problems situations as well as to incorporate the concepts from alternative paradigms. The use of systems metaphors serves as support the formalization of the process by which a decision maker

analyses management problem contexts in the light of different views of the world. The result of the creativity phase is a set of key issues and problems that becomes the basis for the selection of systems methodology/methodologies of intervention in the organization under consideration.

In the *selection* phase, alongside the metaphor analysis, the SiSiM is used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of prospective candidate-methodologies. The intervention methodology/methodologies is/are selected on the basis of whether their strengths make them adequate for dealing with major organizational issues and problems identified in the creativity phase. The result of the selection phase is the “dominant” methodology which, if necessary, is to be supported by respective “dependent” methodologies.

During the *implementation* phase, the methodology/methodologies selected are applied to devise the required specific suggestions and to implement these, that is, to process the management problems situation in an adequate manner. The result will be a coordinated change caused in such aspects of the organization under consideration that are currently most vital to its effective, efficient, ethical, etc. functioning. The views of the participants as to what the major organizational problem areas are change over time. A dynamic aspect of the TIS means a continual iterative circling about the creativity, selecting and changing implementation, in accordance with the relations between the “dominant” and the “dependent” methodologies.

The TSI, therefore, encourages creative reasoning on the nature of the management problem situation under consideration, and once the decision on the character of the major organizational difficulties has been made, the SIS conducts the manager/researcher towards the type of systems methodology most adequate in creative dealing with the problems identified as major ones. As the intervention using the TSI proceeds, the nature of the problems situation is being analysed, which will be reflected in the selection of the systems methodology/methodologies. Namely, in dealing with highly complex, dynamic, interactive, multilayer management problem situations, the simultaneous identification of different relevant aspects revealed through different perspectives of observing the situation means the use of different systems methodologies in *combination* – one is “dominant” whereas the others are the “support” methodologies.

As a meta-methodology, the TIS has made an important theoretical-methodological and applicable step by making it possible to use the methodologies belonging to different paradigms *in one and the same intervention and in one and the same problem situation*. The TSI tries to devise an adequate, coherent way of managing different methodologies that rely on alternative epistemologic premises. On condition that it is practically impossible to use different methodologies alongside each other in complex problems situations, the TSI assumes that the best way in methodological pluralism is to – over a given time interval – treat one methodology as “dominant”, and the others as “dependent” and that the relationship among the methodologies is to be continually analysed and changed in accordance with new knowledge on the management problem situation under consideration.

A special, vital strength of the TSI is to link:

- pluralism in the creativity phase – research into the management problem situations via *different*

perspectives, that is, different conceptions of the world, with

- pluralism in the selection and implementation phases – an appropriate management of *different combined methodologies*.

If the greatest strength of the TSI was its activity on the meta-methodological level, in order to ensure that methodologies representing different paradigmatic hypotheses can be used combined, the activities on this level also resulted into certain TSI weaknesses. Similarly to the SiSiM, the TSI requires that the “total” methodologies be used, which evidently results into a substantial *lack of flexibility* in the use of methodologies, i.e., their methods, models, and techniques.

A separate, unsolved TSI problem refers to the assumption that it can remain “above paradigms”, selecting methodologies in accordance with a specific human interest they have to meet. The different paradigms, however, relying on the differently understood realities and built into different systems methodologies, provide answers to all human interests, in either an implicit or an explicit way [19, 1993, pp. 53 - 70].

A special systems theoretical, methodological and applicable development, relevant from the point of view of improving pluralism, is the **Multimethodology**. This development endeavours to link sections of methodologies that may come from different paradigms, in theoretically founded and practically useful ways [11, 1997 a, pp. 1 - 20; 12, 1997 b, pp. 407 - 440; 13, 2006, pp. 217 - 240; 14, 1997, pp. 489 - 509].

The basic idea of Multimethodology is that all problem situations involving varied material, social and personal aspects are extremely complex and multidimensional. Therefore, and in order that the intervention in the problem area under consideration be as efficient as possible, it is necessary to: a) identify all its relevant determinants within limited resources, and b) wherever possible, use a certain rank of methodologies (or their sections) that may be founded on different paradigms.

Important for determining the context of the Multimethodology are:

1. the real world *problem situation* under consideration,
2. the *theories and methodologies* available, and
3. the *agents* who make a selection and undertake intervention into a respective problem situation.

Similarly, the overall context of Multimethodology is determined by the *relationships* established between:

- agents and methodologies/techniques,
- agents and problem situation,
- methodologies/techniques and the situation in question.

Important dimensions of these relations can be highlighted via appropriate series of questions focused upon the design of the intervention.

Thus, the *context* of Multimethodology is determined by three conceptual systems and their important interrelations – Figure 3. [12, 1997 b, p. 420].

The conceptual system related to the contents of the *problem situation* under consideration includes three spheres/worlds – material, social, and personal, as well as the language as a medium. The distinctions among these spheres are analytical in character, since there are no separated ontological worlds, nor are they independent on one another.

The conceptual system of *intervention* includes the organizational agents who make selections and act. In the Multimethodology context the agents – with their knowledge, developments, relations with a problem situation under consideration, their personalities, values, obligations – are awarded the central position. Of course, any methodology or conceptual frame of ideas are, in reality, at the disposal of the agents, that is, those who use them in dealing with the problem situation [12, 1997 b, p. 428].

Leaning on the theories and methodologies available, the conceptual system of *intellectual resources* is built up of the following two conceptual frames relevant for methodologies integration:

1. the conceptual frame for *mapping* methodologies, and
2. the conceptual frame for *decomposition* of methodologies.

The conceptual frame for methodology *mapping* is the view that Multimethodology has to be expressed in the categories of two key properties of intervention:

- the multidimensional character of the problem situation under consideration – a material, social, and personal worlds, and
- different types of activities to be undertaken – understanding, analysis, estimation and action taking.

The result of the combining of the two key factors is an analytical grid that can be used to map the characteristics of various methodologies, the goal being the support to their linking together. The logic of this conceptual frame is that the overall intervention in the problem situation under consideration means dealing with three key dimensions of the situation – the material, the social, and the personal ones, via four different phases – apprehending, analysis, estimation, and action taking. Each section of the grid generates questions referring to the specific important aspects of the situation/intervention under consideration, and these aspects have to be identified.

The given conceptual frame can be used in different ways. In the first place, it is possible to examine and evaluate the strengths (and weaknesses) of individual methodologies and map them on the grid in order to find out to what extent they determine relevant issues. Or, alternatively, it is possible to test which methodologies may be helpful in a given specific aspect of intervention.

The conceptual frame of methodology *decomposition* has it that the essence of Multimethodology is to – upon respective decomposition of methodologies (which may be relying on different paradigms) into their methods, techniques, tools – provide for a creative linking of their parts. Therefore, when starting from the idea that the methods/techniques can be taken from one and purposefully applied within another methodology, it is necessary that different methodologies be studied in detail, to find out where the fruitful links can be created. In this process the methodologies must be decomposed systematically so as to identify their separable elements and their functions or purposes. We suggest that it be done in the categories of distinctions among the philosophy principles – why; the methodology phases – what, and techniques – how. In “moving” one technique from one methodology (and paradigm) to another, its context and interpretation can be altered respectively.

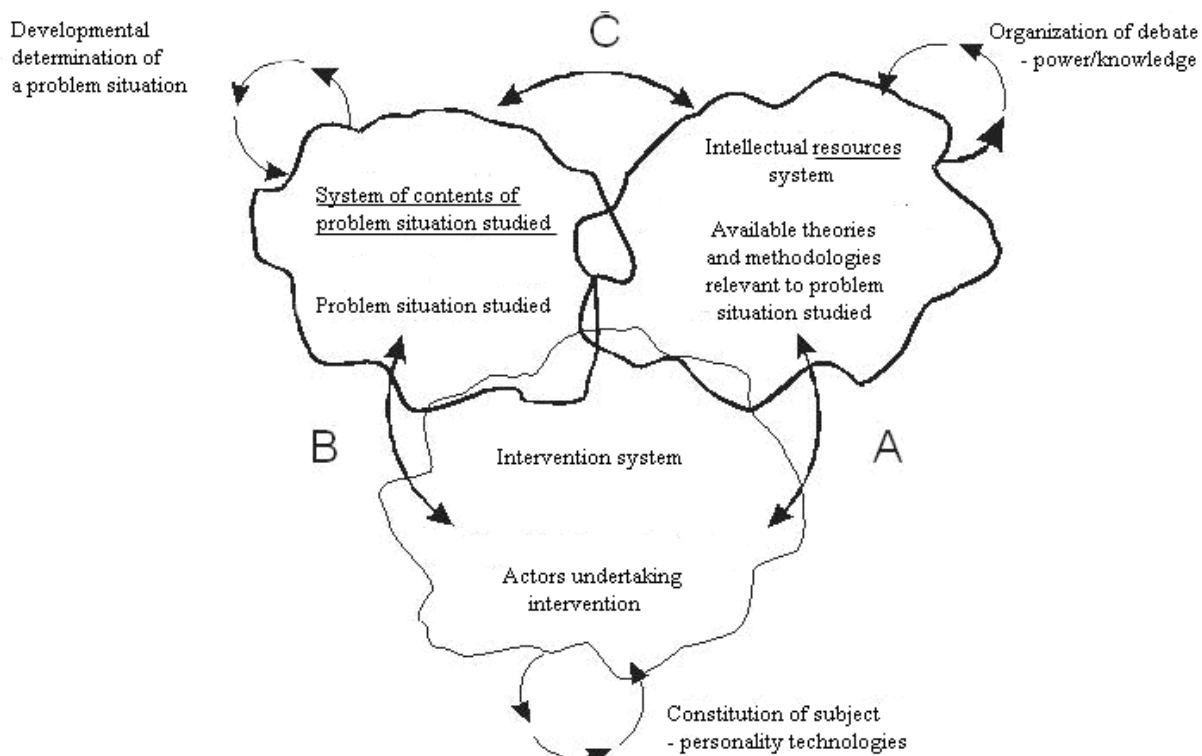


Figure 3. *The Multimethodology context*

The change in the management problem situation under consideration which is generated by the intervention depends on the context, and, by a rule, is rather limited. Critical thinking is carried out through four phases:

- *understanding* problem situation as it is,
- *analysis* as to why it is as it is,
- *estimating* how the situation can be creatively changed, and
- *acting* towards generating change.

Of central importance is to determine the boundaries in the research process. The agents' activities are related to three analytically separate worlds – the material, the social, and the personal ones, that provide the other important dimension for the given concept of critical thinking. Power is an integral part of all the three worlds, and knowledge (including methodologies and meta-methodologies) is undoubtedly linked with power. Interventions in organizational problem situations should be conducted in such a way to provide the conditions for discussion. In other words, the process of critical multimethodology is supposed to be a continual cycle of thinking, judging and acting.

4. Conclusion

With respect for the various perceptions and interpretations of management problem situations and the ef-

forts to ensure an appropriate combined use of different methodologies, methods, models, and techniques in management problem situations structuring and problem solving in organizations, pluralism obviously is a complex research field, relevant in both theoretical, methodological and applicable senses.

Dealing with pluralism in creative organizational development management means, above all, examining the relationship between pluralism as a specific strategy of the *Management Science* development and the strategies of isolationism, imperialism and pragmatism, on one side, as well as taking into consideration the basic pluralistic systemic theoretical, methodological and applicable developments – System of Systems Methodologies, Total Systems Intervention, and Multimethodology, on the other side.

Relying on the presented development of pluralism in systems thinking and the systems practice, a further global consideration of pluralism and its capacities in the creative management of organizational development requires a precise definition of essential aspects in the relations between pluralism and critical systems thinking, an analysis of the key dimensions of paradigmatic variety, a research into the theoretical, methodological and applicable difficulties related to paradigmatic incompatibility. Of special importance is the fact that the future of pluralism in the systems thinking and

practice is directly determined by the manner(s) in which theoretical pluralism can, or should, be processed. Furthermore, any individual development of pluralism (as a meta-paradigm, as a new paradigm, as postmodernism, as disparate pluralism, as critical systems practice) as a particular way of formulating and operationalization of pluralism should be valued from the point of view of the extent to which it enables pluralism to realise its full potential in organizational practice.

Of special importance for the improvement of pluralism in the systems thinking and the systems practice are the experiences in developing pluralism in other disciplines, especially in organizational theory (focus upon combined application of various methods for the purpose of improving our understanding of organizational phenomena), operational research (varied combinations of *soft* methods of operational research, as a rule managed by interpretative paradigm), information systems (complementarism in the use of methodologies), consultation in management (the efforts of management consultants with academic experience to point to the relevance of theoretical supports for the purpose of strengthening pluralistic consulting practice).

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